United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

the UNESCO Courier

2007 • number 8 • ISSN 1993-8616

UNESCO
A WILL AND A WAY

the UNESCO Courier

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2007 - N° 8

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Irrigated land in Mexico.

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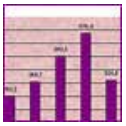

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UNESCO headquarters

UNESCO
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631 million dollars – this is the minimum amount UNESCO needs to operate for the next two years. The budget will be set at the 34th session of UNESCO's General Conference, which brings together - in Paris, from 16 October to 3 November - the representatives of the Organization's 193 Member States who will also determine the 2008-2009 programme. A preview of the Organization's future priorities is presented in this issue of *the UNESCO Courier.*

In an interview, the Director-General of UNESCO, Koïchiro Matsuura, shares his thoughts about the Organization's role in the reform of the United Nations, and underlines Africa and gender equality as priorities that concern all sectors of UNESCO.
The culture sector, illustrated by the article "Cultures travel with humanity", emphasizes particularly the importance of cultural diversity and dialogue between cultures; the natural sciences sector, focus of the article "Water, an obvious priority", stresses education and furthering knowledge about this crucial resource.
The new Assistant Director-General for Education, Nicholas Burnett, puts forward in an interview his vision of the Organization's mission to promote education. In spite of extremely strict budgetary restrictions, he does not believe that financial resources represent a real problem.

The article "Towards inclusive knowledge societies", describing the communication and information sector, highlights freedom of expression and the ways in which the new technologies contribute to safeguarding knowledge and sharing information. "Making room for dialogue", about the social and human sciences sector, defines capacity building as the sector's number-one goal.
The features in this latest *UNESCO Courier* include a chronological presentation of past sessions of the General Conference since 1946; excerpts from the international symposium "60 Years of UNESCO" (2005); clips of early Courier articles about the General Conference; and a closer look at the Organization's budget.

Jasmina Šopova

What are UNESCO's priorities for the next two years? On the eve of the Organization's General Conference (16 October - 3 November) which will determine its new programme and budget, Koïchiro Matsuura, the Director-General, gives us a preview of the coming biennium.

RESPONDING TO NEW EXIGENCIES

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Koïchiro Matsuura,
Director-General of UNESCO.

Koïchiro Matsuura answers Jasmina Šopova's questions.

You have said that UNESCO plays a key role in the reform of the United Nation's system. Could you explain?

UNESCO is playing a key role in the reform of the UN system for a number of reasons. For one, no sustainable development effort is conceivable at the country level without education, without culture and without science and technology which are our Organization's fields of competence. They all are key drivers for the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). UNESCO is indispensable in providing the requisite expertise and assistance to its Member States.

Our efforts globally to design a structure that better responds to the expectations of developing countries and the exigencies of donors are already beginning to bear fruit, in particular where it counts: for the people of developing countries.

UNESCO is also in a privileged position to take advantage of the linkage between global normative work and its translation into operational reality - applying best practices and proven knowledge in all regions of the world.

I am convinced that UNESCO must proactively contribute to the UN reform pilots currently under way in a few countries. This will help us gain experience with new, more effective modalities of cooperation, and to insert ourselves into a range of common UN programmes in different countries. Dedicated training efforts for field and headquarters staff will help ensure that UNESCO provides high-quality assistance.

What are UNESCO's priorities for the coming two years?

UNESCO's priorities for the coming two years are set out in the new medium-term strategy and the programme and budget, both of which will be adopted by the General Conference in October.

Each Programme Sector will have to pursue two or three specific priorities and seek to attain explicitly defined results. This results-based approach will be a consistent feature of all our activities in the future. Our efforts will be measured by the extent to which we succeed in making tangible contributions to the attainment of internationally agreed development goals.

Moreover the Organization has set two overarching priorities- Africa and gender equality. In general, UNESCO will strive to act in a unified manner and favour an "intersectoral" approach, rather than organizing work sector by sector. UN coherence and effectiveness begins at home. As we are striving to "deliver as one" at the country level, we must also demonstrate within our own organization that we can act together as one.

Lip service alone will not suffice. We must also solidify our presence and impact at both the global and country levels, capitalizing on our range of competences and functions.

Will UNESCO have the necessary resources to implement its activities?

It is in the nature of our mission that we are always asked to do more and hence need more resources.

But in a world with limited resources, where governments are also tightening their budgets, we must learn to economize and to implement our activities in the most cost-effective manner. New modalities may need to be applied which will allow us to render assistance with less financial input without compromising results and quality of delivery. In this context, think only of the potential of South-South cooperation.

At this General Conference, I am asking UNESCO's Member States to provide us with a budget level of US$ 631 million for the next two years. This is above the zero-nominal growth level that has constrained us in past years. It is not as high as many of us would have wished. But I am confident that it is a level that can command consensus among the different interests and aspirations of our Member Governments. Consensus on the budget level would thus strengthen the Organization as a whole and lay a solid foundation for support in the years to come.

Cultural diversity and dialogue between cultures are on the list of UNESCO's top priorities. The Organization now has three conventions that protect humanity's cultural heritage. The challenge lies in applying them.

CULTURES TRAVEL WITH HUMANITY

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The felt bowler hat, typical of 19th century Europe, is now typical of Aymara Indians in the Andes.

Safeguarding and promoting cultural diversity and its corollary, dialogue between cultures, make up a UNESCO priority. The Organization spent years identifying and making an inventory of cultural property around the world before putting forward in 1972 the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. It was an important phase, necessary but not sufficient. Because the concept reflected rather heavily the European perspective, a large portion of the world whose cultural wealth did not rest on tangible heritage felt excluded.

In the years since 2000, the concept of culture was expanded in the Organization's texts. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) defined it as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group that encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs."

Two new texts emerged: the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), followed by the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). "With these instruments, we practically completed the construction of the legal structure to protect cultural property," explains Françoise Rivière, Assistant Director-General for Culture. "UNESCO today protects cultures in all their forms: tangible, intangible and objects (museum pieces, for instance, or shipwrecks protected by the Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage). From now on, the challenge lies in the application of the conventions. Most people think a convention's entry into force is the end of the process when on the contrary that's where it all starts, once the normative base exists."

The essence of greater harmony

Cultural diversity was recognized as "common heritage of humanity" in the 2001 Universal Declaration. The World Heritage sites testify to this, both through places (from Venice, Italy to Timbuktu, Mali and Easter Island, Chile) and down through time (from the archaeological sites of the Côa Valley, Portugal, to Brasilia). Further testimony comes from the masterpieces of the oral and intangible heritage of humanity, as diverse as Bolivian Kallawaya rituals, Japanese Ningyo Johruri Bunraku puppet theatre, Vanuatu sand drawings, Georgian polyphonic singing, and the Gule Wamkulu dance with masks practiced in Malawi, Zambia and Mozambique.

Diversity is both an established fact and a value. Its recognition as a factor in social cohesion and human development, essential for greater harmony in intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual life, is at the heart of UNESCO's concerns.

Today's tradition, yesterday's novelty

Nonetheless, the decision to safeguard diversity in the face of homogenization and the threat of extinction is not synonymous with a vision of culture as unchangeable, isolated and defensive. All cultures are dynamic; they evolve with time, through contact with other cultures – sometimes in the form of exchange, other times conflict. Diversity always involves a degree of tension. Cultures are not sedentary; they're nomadic, they travel with humanity. Not static but fluctuating, they grow and change. Today's tradition is yester-

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Minaret and interior courtyard of the Mosque of Sankare, Timbuctu, Mali.

day's novelty. The felt bowler hat, typical of 19th century Europe, is now typical of Aymara Indians in the Andes. This is why diversity and dialogue have a relationship of reciprocity. Cultural heritage is not a static legacy that need only be safeguarded, like a museum piece, but instead the ground for permanent and sometimes tense dialogue, among all its forms of expression.

The concept of culture has indeed changed over time, but the safeguarding of cultural diversity has been a priority for UNESCO since its foundation, as shown in its Constitution, in which the Organization pledges to help preserve "the independence, integrity and fruitful diversity of the cultures and educational systems of the States members". ■

Carlos Tello Díaz
(UNESCO)

WATER, AN OBVIOUS PRIORITY

Nearly one person out of five in the world has no access to drinking water. Hardly surprising that water is UNESCO's main priority. To face this challenge, the Organization emphasizes education and increased knowledge about this key resource. Another UNESCO priority issue related to water is preventing and reducing the impact of tsunamis.

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A qanat in Iran. Qanats spread as far as Mexico in the West and China in the East.

Contrary to popular belief, there is enough water on the planet for everybody - but on the condition the supply is managed wisely. As it stands, 1.1 billion people still have insufficient access to drinking water, according to the 2006 United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR). And halving the percentage of the population without access to water by 2015, as specified in the United Nations Millennium Goals, will be a major challenge. Estimates say this goal will not be reached in Sub-Saharan Africa before 2075.

"Water has been the main priority of UNESCO's Natural Sciences sector for the last six years," says Walter Erdelen, Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences. A direct consequence: the budget allocated to water-related programmes has increased by 40% since 2001. "The activities conducted by UNESCO in the domain of freshwater are by far the most extensive within the United Nations system. We employ about 200 people," says Andràs Szollosi-Nagy, Director of the Division of Water Sciences at UNESCO.

Essential for assuring effective distribution of resources, wise water management is all the more crucial in regions affected by drought or desertification. "There will always be enough water for everyone, but humans must realize the importance of good governance for this precious resource," stresses Szollosi-Nagy.

Investing in the future

To manage water more wisely, we need sound knowledge of existing resources. This is why UNESCO contributes to the United Nations World Water Development Report (WWDR), published every three years (next edition in 2009). In addition, 12 water centres have been established in different countries around the world to increase knowledge about this resource. Centres specialized in key areas such as managing water in urban settings, water and climate change, and water laws and policies are adding to research and reframing the water issue within a wider cultural context.

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The Aral sea is drying up. Studies, tests, measurements of the level, the salinity of water are done by the Institute of Geography.

The International Centre on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structures (ICQHHS) in Yazd (Iran), for instance, conducts research on these traditional underground irrigation systems.

The goal is to revive the ancestral technique in regions where modern solutions, which use up a lot of water, have failed. Another goal is to promote systems that further not only irrigation but also communication among people and cultures. "Qanats, which appeared in Iran almost 3000 years ago, spread as far as Mexico in the West and China in the East," explains Szollosi-Nagy.

Prevent the worst

Another key issue for the Sciences sector: disaster mitigation, particularly tsunamis. Founded in the mid-1960s in the Pacific Ocean, the tsunami early warning system has since made considerable progress.

With the help of extra budgetary funding that poured in after the December 2004 tsunami, the provisional alert system was deployed in the Indian Ocean. Sweden - 10% of its population annually chooses Thailand as a holiday destination - donated a substantial amount. In coming years, the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) plans to expand the alert system to the North Atlantic, the Mediterranean and the Caribbean.

The existing tsunami warning system, implemented in the Pacific Ocean in the 1960s and in the Indian Ocean in 2006, uses 35 deep-ocean pressure sensors. These devices, installed at a depth of 1000 to 4000 meters, detect seismic activity leading to a tsunami and send an alert. Only 88 are needed to make the system global. But funds are lacking for such a system to be deployed. Just 1.2% of UNESCO's budget is currently allocated to IOC activities.

To avert future disasters, better coordination between the various coastal countries is another crucial requirement. "Technically, the warning system in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean and Caribbean will certainly be in place by 2009. But will the alert signal reach the populations concerned? Highly unlikely! Even if you have a telephone, you still need to know the number to call the fire department!" explains Patricio Bernal, IOC Executive Secretary.

More funds, better understanding between coastal countries – additional conditions for successfully implementing a global tsunami warning system include revising maritime legislation, teaching populations about rescue techniques and creating evacuation infrastructure.

Katerina Markelova and Agnès Bardon
(UNESCO)

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Baan Khem, Phang Nga province, one of the hardest hit villages during the tsunami of 26 December 2004.

Newly appointed Assistant Director-General for UNESCO's Education Sector and former Director of the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report published by UNESCO, Nicholas Burnett explains his vision for education and UNESCO's role in promoting it.

FROM EDUCATION FOR ALL TO ALL OF EDUCATION

Interview by Ariane Bailey and Sue Williams (UNESCO)

As Director of the Global Monitoring Report, your focus has been on progress towards the Education for All (EFA) goals. What are you going o draw from that experience?

I have a good knowledge of what has to be done both around the world, with our partner agencies and within the sector. But I don't intend to only be the Assistant Director-General (ADG) for Education for All. I intend to be the ADG for all of education. Within that, nothing is more important, however, than EFA.

© UNESCO/Rocky Roe

Hagara Elementary in Port Moresby (Hanuabada). Papua New Guinea has over 800 different languages and children can begin their learning experience in their mother-tongue.

What needs to be done with EFA?

EFA goals… emerge as being in two categories: goals which people are paying attention to, such as primary school, gender parity and quality in education and goals which people are not paying sufficient attention to such as, with some notable exceptions, literacy, early childhood and the needs of youth who don't go to school or don't learn while at school. I am particularly worried about the lack of movement on literacy.

We need to make sure that we are well geared up to promote the areas where we're not moving through advocacy and through making the technical competencies available where they are needed.

What other areas need particular attention?

Secondary education for example, for which, because of the relative success at the primary level, there is an enormous demand coming from all over the world. We have to see what we need to do to help support that. It can be partially within the EFA framework through gender parity but it is much more.

One of the issues globalisation is raising in almost every country is: what sort of specific skills do people need, what is the balance between specific and general skills? We need to help countries come to their own answers. Vocational skills and training is, of course, an area of the International Labour Organization (ILO) activity as well as UNESCO and I intend to explore our relationship with ILO.

International finance is a third area that needs attention. There are two big problems: first, there is not enough and second, it is not nec-

© UNESCO/Danica Bijeljac

Nicholas Burnett.

essarily going to the right countries and the right sub-sectors of education. Although UNESCO is not an aid agency, it is a major voice and has a major advocacy role to play, to constructively engage with some of the donors. Too much of some countries' bilateral aid goes to foreign students attending their universities and clearly insufficient resources are going to Africa. Moreover, we're facing a worrying situation: aid for basic education has increased progressively until 2004 and dropped in 2005. Preliminary data for 2006 also indicate that promises aren't being met but that doesn't mean they aren't being met by some of the donors.

How can we change this tendency?

There is a lot of interest and goodwill among donors in how they could support UNESCO more directly. The donors don't want us to fail; they want us to succeed: what we have to figure out is ways to work with them as partners so we succeed and they succeed as well.

I'm looking to reinforce several partnerships for direct collaboration with OECD and with EFA partners - World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNICEF, United Nations Population Fund - but also with the Fast Track Initiative (FTI). UNESCO has just become a more formal member of FTI, and there is enormous scope for collaboration. But its nature depends on what we are trying to do: part of it is about influencing where the aid goes and for this the links with the World Bank and the FTI are very important.

Our credibility also has to do with knowledge and knowledge management. UNESCO should be the premier source of knowledge about education in the world... Knowledge is one of the key areas at UNESCO that we need partly to rebuild and partly make more visible. I've been surprised at how much knowledge there is at UNESCO. The problem is getting access to it.

We have to separate knowledge production and generation, and knowledge management where we would like to take advantage of knowledge generation by others as well as by us.

What about private partnerships?

I want to look for ways to work effectively with the private sector. For example, we need to do more work on private schools. In countries like Haiti education is delivered through the private sector as in much of Latin America. We should take a pragmatic approach towards private education and play an important role in helping governments regulate it. Regulation doesn't have to be seen as control to dampen down but positive regulation to align services delivered by the private sector with public goals.

Resources for UNESCO are perhaps the first obstacle that leaps up?

There are two types of resources, financial and human; despite the very tight budgetary constraints, I don't believe that resources will ultimately be a problem. There is an enormous amount of money around to support education development in developing countries and I believe that we can access it if we deploy our own human resources properly.

We have many capable people and we have good relationships with our Member States. We have to improve the way we work together.

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A child working in a village above Chang Mai (Karen Village), Thailand.

Over the coming two years, UNESCO is committed to continue working for freedom of expression and press freedom and to promoting the use of the information and communication technologies to foster inclusive knowledge societies that empower individuals and communities.

TOWARDS INCLUSIVE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETIES

© UNESCO/Fiona Ryan

Cyber café, Jemaa el-Fna square in Morocco.

"Contributing to the construction of inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication," is how UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information (ADG/CI), Abdul Waheed Khan encapsulates the objectives of his sector for the coming biennium.

This echoes objectives established by World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), which UNESCO helped organize in Geneva in 2003 and in Tunis in 2005. UNESCO remains active in the WSIS process, destined to build people-centered information societies that are mindful of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, of the basic human right of freedom of expression.

That strategy focuses on fostering free, independent and pluralistic communication and universal access to information. This is essential for the strengthening of participatory democracy and for the struggle against poverty, as communication and information play a central role in development. However, in many parts of the world, the media need to be reinforced so as to contribute to the international development drive, says Mr Khan.

Media development has long been at the centre of CI's work, notably through programmes such as the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) which, over the last 27 years, has raised some US$ 93 million for over 1,100 projects in 139 developing countries and countries in transition. IPDC is the only forum in the United Nations to discuss and promote free and independent media in developing coun-

© UNESCO/Clemence Petit Perrot

New technologies in a village in Namibia.

tries and countries in transition.

The CI sector is also committed to continue serving as a watchdog for freedom of expression around the world, an area in which UNESCO plays a leading role, reminding Member States of their obligation to respect this fundamental human right enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and recognized by the WSIS.

Creating resources

"Creating the resources in Member States for them to develop free and independent media is our bread and butter," says Mr Khan, recalling that universal access to knowledge depends on adequate communication and information infrastructures.

"At stake is the empowerment of individuals and communities", says Mr Khan, who recalls that the link between empowerment and knowledge is becoming ever stronger. It is therefore not surprising that another major objective for CI, is to support UNESCO in working towards fulfilling the ambitious goals of the Education For All (EFA) drive adopted by the international community in Dakar in 2000. EFA concerns overall improvements in the provision of quality basic education and life skills to all and achieving gender parity in education by 2015.

The multiplier effect

Mr Khan explains that the information and communication technologies (ICTs) can have a "multiplier effect," contributing to the education of learners and the training of teachers. "Likewise, CI works to ensure that the multiplier effect of ICTs benefits UNESCO's promotion of cultural diversity and dissemination of scientific knowledge." Thus, argues Mr Khan, CI is the leader when it comes to cooperation between UNESCO's sectors.

In addition, the ADG recalls that ICTs not only help generate and disseminate knowledge but are also important for the preservation of knowledge. Programmes such as Memory of the World serve to preserve and disseminate the heritage of documentary material and archives. Thus, through ICTs, UNESCO's Communication and Information sector has become involved in the preservation of knowledge, including indigenous knowledge, and in cultural heritage.

The new technologies have opeated a deep change in the flow of information and its sharing. Mr Khan strongly believes that UNESCO must play its role in bridging the knowledge gap to ensure that this multidirectional flow of information and knowledge does not pass by those who are less privileged. With programmes such as the Community Multimedia Centres, and a wide range of partners including some of the world's leading private sector companies and NGOs, as well as networks such as the new Power of Peace Network, Mr Khan is convinced that UNESCO can contribute to world peace and development.

Roni Amelan
(UNESCO)

© Manitoba gouvernment

The Hudson's Bay Company Archival Records (Canada) are inscribed on UNESCO's «Memory of the World» Register. This programme encourages the preservation of documentary heritage.

"We're no longer merely conducting and publishing research. Or preparing conventions and declarations." Pierre Sané, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences, wants to go further and get involved on the ground. Promoting dialogue and building capacity are his main goals.

MAKING ROOM FOR DIALOGUE

© UNESCO/Ivaldo Alves

Federal Supreme Court of Justice, Brazil.

States facing the challenges of regional integration – this was the focus of the seminar recently held in Cap Verde (24-26 September 2007), as part of an extensive research project launched under the auspices of the programme MOST (Management of Social Transformations). The project, exploring the reasons for the slow progress of a process essential for lifting West African countries out of their "maldevelopment", has already organized national seminars in 10 of the 15 Member States of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Five more of these seminars will take place in upcoming months, leading up to an international conference in autumn 2008 that will formulate propositions to be submitted to ECOWAS heads of state.

Each of these 10 meetings provided the opportunity to gather around the same table scientists, political decision-makers and those involved in economic and social development. "Often it was the first time they'd been brought together," underlines Pierre Sané, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Social and Human Sciences. The project clearly illustrates the objective the Social and Human Sciences sector (SHS) has set for the future: engage researchers and policy-makers in dialogue so that social transformations can be more closely linked to the values inherent in UNESCO's Constitution.

Promoting dialogue

For Mr Sané, "The main thrust is that we're no longer merely conducting and publishing research. Or preparing conventions and declarations. We want to go further and facilitate policy-making that takes into account the results of this research and the standards defined by these instruments. Such implementation demands dialogue, so SHS is creating places for dialogue." This is the case for the programme? Network? Supporting regional integration, but also for managing social

© UNESCO/Gert Van Dermeersch

Preparing for a workshop on democracy, human rights and the management of conflict (Cubal, Angola).

development, through regional or sub-regional forums of Social Development Ministers. The model, launched in Latin America back in 2001, is now taking root in the different regions around the world. It encourages not only exchange between researchers and decision-makers but also among the ministers themselves. To date nearly 80 ministers and ministry delegates have taken an active part in these regional or sub-regional meetings.

The coalitions of cities against racism, is another programme promoting dialogue. Here the cities facilitate connections between decision-makers, researchers and various representatives of civil society at the local level to implement concrete actions – through education, housing, employment or cultural activities – against racism and exclusion.

In the same area of human rights can be noted the existing networks or those being formed to tackle the obstacles encountered by specific rights directly concerning UNESCO: right to education with the Latin American Research Network of Ombudspersons (LARNO) and cultural rights with the African Research Network on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ARNESCR). And the effort to create places for dialogue applies also to other SHS fields of action.

Even philosophy fits in, as it creates dialogue between Asia and the Arab world, or Africa and Latin America. Post-conflict justice will thus be the issue debated at the philosophical dialogue between Africa and Latin America, to be held in Angola.

Capacity building

Other examples, concerning women or ethics? Mr Sané started to cite some – the Palestinian Women's Research and Documentation Centre, for one – and changed his mind. Obviously the strategic focus of dialogue still applies to those activities, but they seem more closely related to the second main thrust: building capacities. This is not really a new priority for SHS: UNESCO has long been providing assistance to member states who request it. To develop scientific ethics, for instance, to set up national ethical committees or regional centres, and so on. But there too momentum is building. After Vilnius and Egerton, Doha and Cordoba will acquire Regional Documentation and Information Centres for bioethics education. The Asia Pacific region will soon be dealing with the ethics of energy technologies. An equivalent of the Palestinian women's research centre is planned in the Great Lakes region of Africa. There is no shortage of projects.

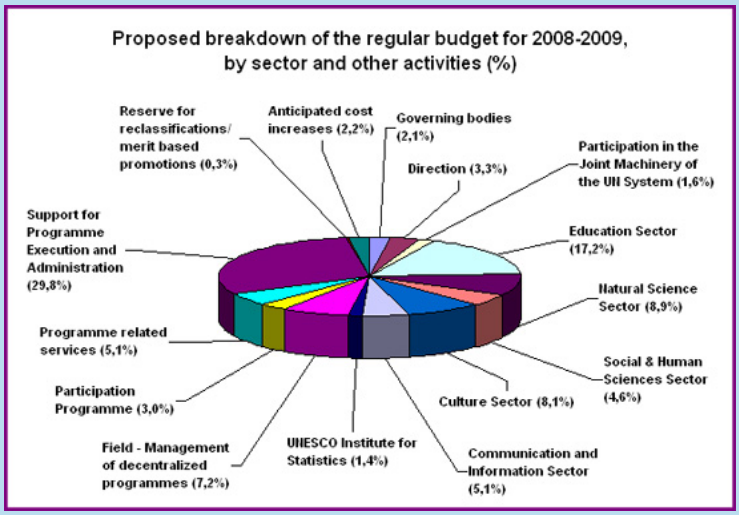
Pierre Gaillard,
(UNESCO)

© UNESCO/Jean Mohr

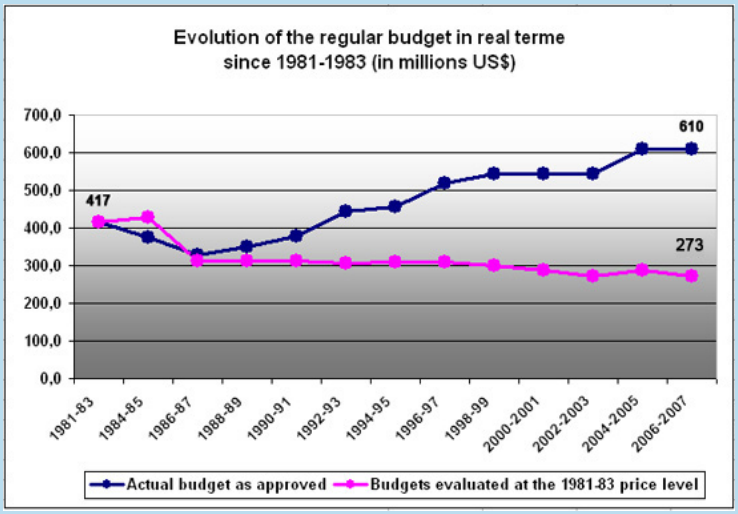
A father and his daughter in front of their house, in a shantytown in Italy.

Budget

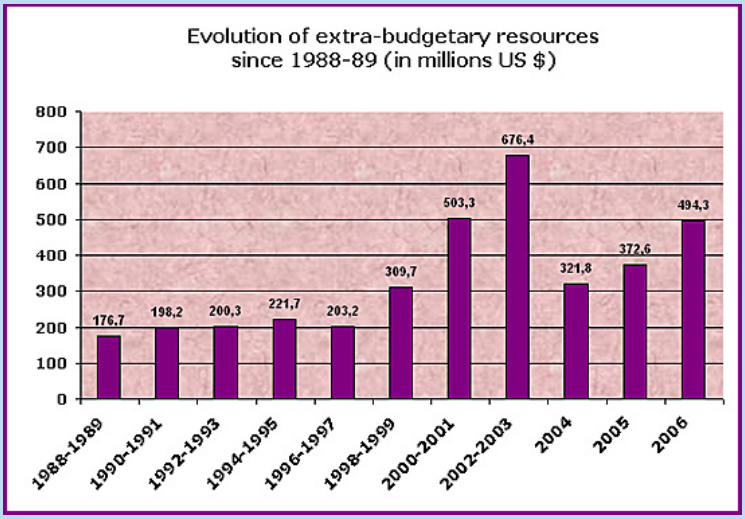
**With 17.2% of the regular budget,
the Education sector gets the largest share.
This is shown in the distribution of the regular budget put forward for 2008-2009,
to be approved by the General Conference
(16 October – 3 November).**


Proposed breakdown of the regular budget for 2008-2009, by sector and other activities (%)
Reserve for reclassifications/ merit based promotions (0,3%)
Anticipated cost increases (2,2%)
Governing bodies (2,1%)
Direction (3,3%)
Participation in the Joint Machinery of the UN System (1,6%)
Support for Programme Execution and Administration (29,8%)
Education Sector (17,2%)
Natural Science Sector (8,9%)
Programme related services (5,1%)
Social & Human Sciences Sector (4,6%)
Participation Programme (3,0%)
Culture Sector (8,1%)
Field - Management of decentralized programmes (7,2%)
UNESCO Institute for Statistics (1,4%)
Communication and Information Sector (5,1%)

The graph on the left illustrates the planned breakdown of the regular budget, which is made up of the Member States' mandatory contributions.
Source: Bureau of the budget.



The graph on the left shows how the regular budget has changed since 1981, in budget periods (usually two years).
While in 1981-83 it amounted to US$414 million, for 2006-07 it came to US$610.
In real terms, however, the 610 million calculated according to a constant dollar value (that of 1981-83), would be the equivalent today of US$ 273 million.
Source: Bureau of the budget.



The graph on the left shows the evolution of extrabudgetary resources, meaning the contributions the main partners of the United Nations system and the Member States choose to make.
From US$176.7 million in 1988-89, they increased to US$676.4million in 2002-3.
Since 2004, data are annual, not biennial.
Source: Bureau of the budget.

The General Conference in 20 dates

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UNESCO Headquarters were located at the former Hotel Majestic on the Avenue Kléber in Paris.

To date there have been 34 ordinary and 4 extraordinary sessions of the General Conference. Some of the well-known and not so well-known highlights of the past 61 years

1946 – A solemn ceremony at the Sorbonne University in Paris opens the first session of the General Conference. Meetings take place at the former Hotel Majestic, UNESCO's headquarters on the Avenue Kléber. Julian Huxley (United Kingdom) is elected Director-General.

1947 – he second conference meets in Mexico City and adopts a programme focused on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of educational, scientific and cultural life in war-devastated countries. Also of interest to delegates: ecological problems of tropical forests, notably in the Amazon.

1953 – An extraordinary session approves the nomination of Luther H. Evans (United States) as the new Director-General. The decision to construct a new Headquarters building in Paris is taken. The International Social Science Council is established.

1954 – At the eighth conference in Montevideo (Uruguay), UNESCO adopts the Parthenon as its official emblem. Designed in 1947, it has already featured in some of the Organization's publications.

1956 – India is host to the conference in New Delhi where delegates approve UNESCO's first three major projects: on primary education and teacher training in Latin America, scientific research on arid lands and mutual appreciation of Eastern and Western cultural values.

1958 – The conference meets at the newly-inaugurated UNESCO House on the Place de Fontenoy in Paris. Works by Pablo Picasso and Joan Miró are unveiled. Vittorino Veronese (Italy) is named Director-General.

1960 – he eleventh General Conference decides to create the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission.

1962 – The conference approves the establishment of the International Institute of Educational Planning. René Maheu (France) is appointed Director-General .

1964 – UNESCO decides to launch a five-year experimental world literacy programme, paving the way for an eventual worldwide campaign. Science programmes are accorded the same importance as those in education.

1966 – To celebrate UNESCO's twentieth anniversary, Nobel Peace Prize winners take part in a round table. French president Charles de Gaulle addresses the General Conference. September 8 is proclaimed International Literacy Day.

1970 – The conference decides to launch a programme on Man and the Biosphere.

1972 – At its seventeenth session, the conference decides to implement a plan for the study of oral traditions and the promotion of African languages. It also adopts the World Heritage Convention.

1974 – Amadou Mahtar M'Bow (Senegal) is chosen as the new Director-General. The General Conference grants observer status to the Palestine Liberation Organization and 14 African liberation movements recognized by the Organization for African Unity.

1985 – The fax machine is used for the first time as an essential working tool between the General Conference in Sofia (Bulgaria) and the Secretariat in Paris.

1987 – Federico Mayor (Spain) is appointed Director-General. The conference approves a plan of action in education for the prevention of AIDS.

1997 – The United Kingdom returns to UNESCO having previously left in 1985.

1999 – The newly-elected Director-General, Koïchiro Matsuura (Japan), undertakes major reforms to restructure and decentralize the Organization's staff and activities. The UNESCO Institute for Statistics is set up.

2001 – The conference adopts the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

2003 – First Lady Laura Bush addresses the plenary session, marking the return of the United States to UNESCO after 19 years of absence. Mrs Bush is also named UNESCO Honorary Ambassador for the United Nations Literacy Decade.

2007 – On 8 October, Singapore is UNESCO's 193rd Member State. The same day, a Google search for "UNESCO General Conference" yields 2.2 million results. A similar query for "UNESCO" alone gives 36 million.

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What they say about UNESCO

The international symposium "Sixty Years of UNESCO History" (16-18 November 2005) brought together some 80 speakers on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Organization. Here are a few excerpts.

Claude Lévi-Strauss (France)

By wise customs that we would be wrong to regard as superstitions, these [indigenous] peoples limit the human consumption of other living species and impose moral respect associated with rules to ensure their conservation. Such are the lessons that ethnologists have learned from them, while hoping that, when it helps them join the concert of nations, UNESCO will also assist them in their quest to keep these principles intact and will encourage others to be guided thereby.

Akira Iriye (Japan)

A history of UNESCO, in other words, has a chronology that is not determined by the chronology of the Cold War but that has its own logic, a logic determined by human emotions and aspirations. Some day a history of the contemporary world will be written that takes UNESCO as one of the key actors in inter-cultural communication, not as a marginal presence in the grand drama of international rivalries.

Ibrahima Thioub (Senegal)

UNESCO has, undoubtedly, made a major contribution, and accompanied and participated, in various ways, in the construction and consolidation of the African Nation-States. It has established numerous programmes and projects at the multilateral and bilateral levels, and supported State initiatives. In its ever-widening fields of competence, it has, more often than the other multilateral institutions, assumed positions that are out of step with political neutrality, providing the liberation movements with as much helpful assistance as it could, given the balance of power between the conflicting interests within it.

Dhruv Raina (India)

n 1947, on the declaration of independence of colonial rule, a semblance of a scientific and technological system was in place in India […] UNESCO's intervention in setting the frame for disciplines and disciplinary research communities during this formative decade is important.

Glenda Sluga (Australia)

From its very beginnings UNESCO […] was an agent of ideas, not merely a product of them. The creation of UNESCO made a difference to the ways in which the relationship between universalism and diversity and the political significance of cultural and biological difference were understood.

Emma Rothschild (United Kingdom)

UNESCO has had an intimate relationship, throughout its existence, to the multiple connections which are the subject of transnational history.

Ily a Gaiduk (Russia)

In the 1950s UNESCO gradually abandoned its adherence to non-governmentalism, when it should have served as a forum of "people speaking to people", and became more and more the "plaything" of governments […] Along with this systemic modification came the increase of UNESCO's involvement in the solution of practical problems, such as the provision of technical assistance to underdeveloped countries.

Heloisa Maria Bertol Domingues (Brazil)

The scientific internationalism that oriented the actions […] of UNESCO […] can be summarized in the vision of man and nature as a unity […] This unity was also the guiding principle of the Scientific and Cultural History of Humanity project, resulting from the plans of Needham and Huxley […] The History of Humanity would be a history of the sum of the cultures and not of its divisions.

Paul Kennedy (USA)

Today's discords and struggles are a constant reminder of how far we are from the stated aims of the leaders of 1945. But this gap should not ignore the many achievements of this valuable organization, most of which are being given their proper accord in this conference. And it should absolutely not deter us from continuing to believe in UNESCO's larger purposes.

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للتربيـة والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The UNESCO Courier is published by
the United Nations Educational, Scientific
and Cultural Organization
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75352 Paris 07 SP, France
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